



WOMEN VETERANS' NETWORK

Help Preserve the Nation's Memory

Motivated by a desire to honor our nation's war veterans for their service and to collect their stories and experiences while they are still among us, the United States Congress created the Veterans History Project in 2000. The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress collects and preserves audio- and video-taped oral histories, along with documentary materials such as letters, diaries, maps, photographs, and home movies, of America's war veterans and those who served in support of them.

The Veterans History Project covers World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars. It includes all participants in those wars—men and women, civilian and military. It documents the contributions of civilian volunteers, support staff, and war industry workers as well as the experiences of military personnel from all ranks and all branches of service.

While the Veterans History Project does not do the actual interviewing, a Project Kit provides the tools you need to conduct an interview yourself, or have a friend or family member do it with you. The Project Kit is available online at www.loc.gov/vets or you can order one by calling 1-888-371-5848.

This national project has several local partners: the *USS Massachusetts* in Fall River's Battleship Cove. As an official partner of the Project, Director of Oral History, Michele Kelly, can interview you for the Project. Contact Ms. Kelly by phone 508-678-1100 or email oralhistorydirector@battleshipcove.org. The Natick Public Library's Joan Craig, Community Relations Coordinator, can also assist you. Ms. Craig can be reached by phone 508-647-6524 or email jcraig@minlib.net.

The Library of Congress will create a catalog of all oral histories and other documentation collected as a result of the Project, including those items preserved at other sites by participating partners. The names of all veterans and civilians who are interviewed will appear on the Library of Congress's American Folklife Center website.

Message from the New Women's Coordinator



*Heidi Kruckenberg,
Women's Coordinator*

The Department of Veterans' Services has undergone several changes over the past few months. Late in August 2003 the Department's Commissioner, Thomas G. Kelley, was sworn in as Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Services, making him a member of the Governor's cabinet. In October Joan O'Connor was appointed

General Counsel of the Department, which meant she would no longer have time to serve as Women's Coordinator. It was natural for me to take over as Women's Coordinator since I had been assisting Joan in the day-to-day operation of the Network for the past two years as Network Assistant.

Although my workload and schedule has not changed dramatically since I became the Women's Coordinator, I feel a different sense of responsibility and a stronger desire to serve women veterans. I feel an urgency to provide benefits information to women veterans and to raise awareness that women veterans have different needs than their male counterparts. The recent update and expansion to the DVS website provides benefits information in an easy-to-use format. I have plans to expand the resources and links on the entire website, but particularly the women veterans pages. Visit www.mass.gov/veterans.

In addition to having a new URL for its website, DVS has a new office location at 600 Washington Street, Suite 1100 in Boston's Chinatown. The Network phone number has changed to 617-727-3578, Ext. 5781. Please do not hesitate to contact with questions, concerns, or suggestions. I love hearing from women veterans.

Heidi Kruckenberg, Women's Coordinator

-VA Updates -

PTSD Treatment for Women at Boston VA



Back Row (from l-r) Jillian Shipherd, Deborah Rhatigan, Bonnie Roessner, Eve Davision, Elizabeth Pratt. Front Row: Jennifer Plumb, Susan Orsillo, Jennifer Jensen, Erica Sharkansky

For some women veterans, past experiences with difficult events such as sexual or physical assault or serious accidents, significantly influence emotional well-being and life satisfaction. In some cases, these difficul-

ties can reflect the presence of a psychological difficulty called posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

PTSD is a group of psychological difficulties that may occur after a traumatic event experienced either in childhood or adulthood. PTSD symptoms can include repeated unwanted thoughts about the event (memories and/or nightmares), significant anxiety (jumpiness, sleep and concentration problems), and difficulty in relationships. An estimated 10 percent of adult women in the general U.S. population have PTSD at some time during their lives.

To better serve and treat women veterans with PTSD, the Cooperative Studies Center of the VA funded a multi-site study comparing different approaches to treating PTSD. This nationwide study, which has a site at the Boston VA Medical Center, is investigating two short-term therapies.

To participate in the study, female veterans must have PTSD related to a traumatic event that occurred at any time (before, during, or after their military service). Women currently diagnosed with PTSD, as well as those who are not sure or may never have sought treatment for their trauma, are encouraged to contact us. Eligible women will receive 10 weeks of free psychotherapy provided by a trained female therapist.

For more information or for possible referral, please contact Jennifer at 617-232-9500, Ext. 6027.

VA's Summit 2004 to be held June 18-20
Capital Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC
For more information visit www.va.gov/womenvet
or call 202-273-6193

Celebrating a Decade in Women's Health

May 2004 marks the 10th anniversary of the Women Veterans Health Programs at VA Boston Healthcare System. Events are scheduled during this month to celebrate this achievement and to anticipate the next decade of ongoing improvements in the care of women veterans.

On Tuesday, **May 11**, the **Brockton Campus** will honor "The Journey of Women's Healthcare" with a panel discussion from 2:00-4:00 p.m. in the Learning Resource Center in Building 2, followed by a reception in the Women's Health Center.

On Wednesday **May 12**, a celebration will be hosted at the **Jamaica Plain Campus** from 1:00-3:00 p.m. in the basement conference room. Please join us for remarks from VISN and national representatives as we commemorate the achievements of our programs. Veterans along with friends and family are welcome.

For additional information about these programs please contact Diane Harness-DiGloria at 508-583-4500, Ext. 1435 or Pat Robinson at 617-232-9500, Ext. 4120.

VA Benefits for National Guard and Reserve

Reservists and members of the National Guard who served on active duty in a theater of combat may be eligible for VA health care. Such veterans are eligible for two years after leaving the military for VA hospital care for any illness, even if there is insufficient medical evidence to conclude that their illness was a result of their combat service.

Health care may not be provided for any disability that is found to have resulted from a cause other than the service at issue. Veterans with health concerns that may be related to combat are encouraged to seek a medical evaluation at a local VA medical facility.

The primary factor in determining basic eligibility to VA benefits is "veteran status," which is established by active military service and a discharge or release from active service under conditions other than dishonorable. Reservists who served on active duty can establish veteran status and may be eligible for VA benefits depending on the length of active service. In addition, reservists who are never called to active duty may qualify for some VA benefits. National Guard members can establish eligibility for VA benefits only if the President activated them for federal duty.

Source: "A Summary of VA Benefits for National Guard and Reserve Personnel" VA brochure IB-164, May 2003.

- Upcoming Events -

Massachusetts Historical Society Plans the “Women/War/Work” Conference

On **August 20 and 21, 2004**, the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) will present “Women/War/Work,” a two-day conference crafted to examine the history of the relationship between the U.S. military and American women in the twentieth century. Alongside the fundamental debate over the exclusion of women from military service, the presentations will also take into account the role of war work in the gradual movement toward women’s permanent position in the workforce—and, conversely, how female labor has challenged and reshaped the American military and American culture generally.

The event will also provide a space for Massachusetts women veterans to represent themselves at a “Women Who Served” roundtable scheduled for early afternoon on August 20. Speakers at the roundtable will include veterans from World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, and Desert Storm. Veterans are encouraged to attend the roundtable and the rest of conference. MHS offers a special rate to veterans and active duty personnel, including all of Friday’s events for free or both days for \$35 if registered by **July 1**. The conference will take place at MHS, 1154 Boylston Street in Boston. To find out more about the conference or to register, please visit the MHS website at www.masshist.org or call Ondine Le Blanc at 617-646-0524.

The MHS also wants Massachusetts servicewomen to know that it has an active interest in collecting personal papers—letters, diaries, photographs, official papers—relating to their military duty. Please contact Curator of Manuscripts, Brenda Lawson, at 617-646-0502 if you would like to discuss donating your papers. More and more, researchers can untangle reality from myth, and MHS



Downer Forrest, France, c. 1918, from Eleanor Saltonstall papers, Massachusetts Historical Society

WAC Veterans Chapter 14 to Host National Convention in Braintree

The Boston-based Women’s Army Corps (WAC) Veterans Association Bay State Chapter 14 will host the annual National WAC Veterans Association Convention **August 26-29, 2004**, at the Sheraton Braintree. Approximately 200 members of the WAC Veterans Association from across the country will attend the Convention. Nationally, there are over 3,000 members. Chapter 14 has about 80 members.

Interested WAC veterans and friends are cordially invited to attend the Convention or any of the three social events, which include a dinner with entertainment (Aug. 27), the Pallas Athene Luncheon with keynote speaker (Aug. 28), and the President’s Luncheon (Aug. 29).

Deadline for reservations is **July 23, 2004**. For reservations, menu choices/costs and additional information please contact the Chairperson, Jane Reed (President of Chapter 14) at 5 Silver Court, Beverly, MA 01915-5020, telephone: 978-921-0274, email: ejane@comcast.net.

Women at Work Museum Runs “Leaders in Peace and War” Exhibit June-September 2004

The Women at Work Museum will open an exhibit that highlights the work of women in supportive roles and active duty in the military as nurses, war correspondents, pilots, and many other ways. The exhibit opens on June 19, 2004. Events and speakers accompanying the exhibit are listed below. All events take place at the Museum unless noted otherwise. Visit the Museum at 35 County Street in Attleboro. Call 508-226-0325 for more information.

June 19, 2:00-4:00 PM

History of Women in the Military—Slide presentation and living history

July 17, 1:00-4:00 PM

Brigadier General Wilma Vaught, USAF Retired
Presentation (1:00-2:00)—Attleboro High School
Reception (2:30-4:00)—Women at Work Museum

August 7, 2:00-4:00 PM

A Salute to Women Veterans—Welcome home to those serving around the world today

September 18, 1:00-3:00 PM

Ann Wood Kelly—World War II pilot for British Air Transport Auxiliary

Department of Veterans' Services
Attn: Women Veterans' Network
600 Washington St., Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02111

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**World War II Combat Nurses Needed for
New Documentary**



Nurses Are Needed Now!

Coping Mechanism is a film project about the experiences of combat nurses in World War II. Presented in the style of a Red Cross instructional film from the 1940s, the film uses vintage newsreels, documentary footage, home movies, and interviews to examine the ways in which combat nurses dealt with the stress of emotional engagement on

the front lines. If you served as a combat nurse in World War II, please contact filmmaker Chelsea Spear at 617-775-9500 or ogygia_ave@yahoo.com.

Ms. Spear made her filmmaking debut with *Films About Water* and is the recipient of the first Flicker grant for small-gauge filmmakers.

Are You Looking for Part-Time Work?

If you are 55 years of age or over, a Massachusetts resident, and low-income (annual individual income \$11,225 or below) you may be eligible to participate in the Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). You will begin your work with a subsidized part-time community service training position in your local area, working 20 hours a week at \$6.75 per hour. This first position will lead to an unsubsidized higher paying part-time or full-time job for a private sector or non-profit employer. SCSEP provides paid work experience, training, and support services during your job search.

For a brochure and referral to a regional SCSEP coordinator, call 800-243-4636 or 617-727-7750.

The Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program is administered by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Department—Older Worker Division.

Visit the new DVS website:
www.mass.gov/veterans